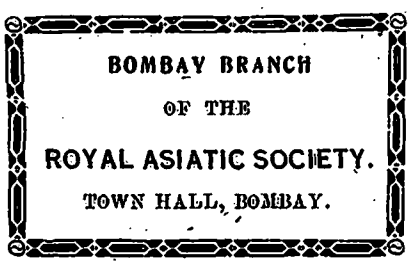
THE CABUL QUESTION

OLIM

958·1
Oli/cab
27159

00027159

B. B. R. A. S.



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

THE CABUL QUESTION,

BEING A

DETAIL OF CENTRAL ASIAN EVENTS BEARING ON THE QUESTION, AND OF GEOGRAPHICAL AND OTHER STATISTICS CONNECTED WITH IT.

ALSO A

DISCUSSION OF THE POLICY HITHERTO PURSUED WITH REFERENCE TO AFFGHANISTAN AND OF THAT WHICH IS NOW ADVISABLE TO FOLLOW.

DEDICATED TO

THE GREATEST LIVING AUTHORITY ON THIS SUBJECT,

SIR HENRY RAWLINSON, K.C.B.

BY

27159

TRANSINDICUS OLIM.

'These questions are sufficient to indicate the problems which will be raised by the further extension of Russian conquests in the direction of India. Indian statesmen must before long address themselves to the difficult task of their solution.'

Saturday Review, 1866.

RR-C-37

LONDON:
PRINTED BY STRANGEWAYS AND WALDEN,
CASTLE STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.
1869.

00027159

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Russian Operations 5
Importance of Charjooee and the Oxus 9
Operations in Bokhara 11
Central Asian Routes 13

CHAPTER II.

Affghan Politics 15
Abdool Ruhman's First Campaign from Balkh . . . 16
Feiz Mahomed's Revolt 17
Sher Ali's Second Defeat 18
Feiz Mahomed's Defeat and Death 18
Yakoob's Khan Campaign in Candahar 18
Cabul retaken by Sher Ali 20
British Policy 20
Abdool Ruhman's Second Campaign from Balkh . . 21
Sher Ali's Position towards us and Russia . . . 21
The Present Position of Affairs 22

CHAPTER III.

Intervention in Cabul 23
Change of Public Opinion 23
Advocates of Military Occupation 25
Feasibility of Intervention 25
Necessity of Intervention 28
Consequences of 'Masterly Inactivity' 31
Disadvantages of Occupation 32
Policy advocated 32
Our Military Position and Resources 34
Pierre le Grand's Will 37

APPENDIX A.

Draft of Despatch on the Subject of Intervention . . 39

APPENDIX B.

Translation of Peter the Great's Will 42

THE CABUL QUESTION.

CHAPTER I.

RUSSIAN OPERATIONS AND CENTRAL ASIAN ROUTES.

THE 'laissez aller' policy in Central Asia, imposed upon our in the East by the ebb of public feeling after 1837-1842, to be now fairly at an end. Until very recently, caution en, with the mass of the English people, a veil for igno- ; non-intervention, a specious cloak for inability to grasp pe with this great question. But the ignorance has been f indifference and inattention; for masses of information in writings mildewing on shelves and men rusting in ob-, regarding most matters connected with those countries North-West Frontier, whose political history has ever ntimately connected with our own; and the inability to th the matter has always rather been the avoidance of leasant and unpopular subject. Now, however, the f events has forced upon us the magnitude of the ques- d discussion is gradually producing a just appreciation There are few now who do not understand that the d of the wedge has been inserted, that substantial re- n and commercial negotiation will necessitate political nce, and that political interference does not necessarily nnexation or even occupation. The public are now ing to realize that whereas, to maintain our Eastern acy, our political frontier must advance to the Oxus, our border and military occupation will, unless the madness gain come upon us, remain at the Suliman range.

While the writer thus hails the first symptoms of an in- ion he has long and consistently advocated, it appears to ch to be regretted that it has been delayed so long. In wever, we are but reaping the fruits of past political nd misconduct. No one can doubt that had we not in 37 persistently thrown away our chances, we should not

in 1838 have entered on an impolitic and unjust war. had we not, in consequence, in 1842, been obliged in sham humiliation to confess ourselves in the wrong, we should in 1865-68 have been content to look on, and see the kin of our ally (under the treaty of 1856) rent by the strugg factions and falling under the influence of Persia and Rus

3. Opinions differ as to the extent to which we have l hitherto refusing support to one or other of the cont parties in Affghanistan. No doubt a grave mistake ha committed, but not so grave as it might have been, had been evident that it would be retrievable at any time wh struggle lasted, since the exhaustion of either victor necessarily be such as to compel him eventually to seek su Neither of the rivals is a Dost Mahomed, who could resto consolidate the distracted and exhausted kingdom; nor e either had Dost Mahomed's qualities, is his position the Dost Mahomed and Akber Khan had with them the patr of all the Affghans, and there was no man of mark to them; but Sher Ali and Abdool Ruhman have only the ested support of parties, not a tithe of whose exorbita mands they can satisfy even when successful, and nine of whom they accordingly disgust into disaffection. M and this is the most important difference in the relati tion, Dost Mahomed had not at his gates two great E powers who, gravitating towards each other, must crus similate all smaller intervening bodies.

4. It must, however, be remembered in consider subject, that opportunities, if they offer for us, arise fo also—that political supremacy is just as necessary to th as to ours, and not much more difficult now for them t us. And on this head it has been curious to obse changing tone of the Russian journals, with every c phase of Central Asian politics. First the *Invalide* ridiculed the notion of the annexation of Turkistan; quently the *Golos* openly speculated on a conterminous and English frontier (we need hardly ask whether they n at Tashkund); and afterwards another Russian journal article of most patronizing tone, while vaunting Russ perior power in Central Asia, offered to admit Engla share in dominion and commerce, on condition of th

y settlement of other points on which the former was yet isfied.

5. Notwithstanding the strange apathy in this respect of Indian and home authorities, the leaders of public opinion h countries have been by no means wanting in their duty; *Saturday Review* and the *Friend of India* have, during st three years, persistently called public attention to the g aspects presented by the development of a question has shifted hourly, like a kaleidoscope, retaining but one nt feature—the steady increasing power, influence, and ge of Russia. Latterly, also, other journals in both ries have taken the matter up, and every variety of n has been offered, and every kind of proposition dis- ; and it is on this very account, and from the observation e extraordinary ignorance continually displayed of the t under consideration, that the writer is encouraged to e that a resumé, such as he proposes now to offer, will not of place.

6. In pursuance of her gigantic scheme of Central Asian ignty, Russia has during the last generation operated on untries east of the Caspian by two converging lines. astern one, directed south and west from Russian Asia, pplementary, and never fully developed. The western outh and east from Russia proper, operated on both of the Caspian, and enveloping that sea has made it a lake, covered with merchant-vessels and war-steamers, fording a perfect base for future movements on Herat the Kurd country by Astrabad, Kochan, and Meshed; which is unassailable on the Persian side save at Astra- d Meshed, as the passes leading in on it from the south fficult in the extreme. Again moving further eastward Mingkishlak on the Caspian, from the river Emba and the Kirghis Steppes, columns on this line converged by steps, digging their wells as they went, on the Aral sea; hat possessed, soon converted it into another lake, its affording naval entrepôts and its waters commanded by at flotillas. At this point, then, Russia held in her hand uths of the Jaxartes and Oxus, the lines of attack on and Khokand; and again moving eastward along the —along that Jaxartes which has from earliest history

protected southern civilization from northern barbarians—the Russians, with advanced guards of clouds of Kirghis, steadily pushed onwards towards Muzrut-i-Turkistan and Tashkund.

7. Tashkund is described by Vambèry as the key of Central Asia, as Herat is of Affghanistan. All accounts unite in pronouncing it the most important city in the three Khanates, the point where the trade of the south and east meets that of the north and west, and from which, as a starting-point, Russian merchandize, or Russian armies, can easiest reach the frontiers either of China or Hindoostan. The native saying is, 'He who holds Tashkund holds Turkistan, and he who holds Herat holds Khorawan.' It may easily be imagined, therefore, how important was the possession of this city to the accomplishment of the ulterior views of the Russians, and how patiently their columns, supported by a chain of posts and aided by a flotilla, were pushed eastward toward a prize of such tempting proportions.

8. The Russian march, however, was by no means unopposed. The Khokandis, backed by the Calmuck and Kipchak tribes, inflicted on the Kirghis some severe reverses, but against the Russian columns they ever shattered themselves in vain. The eastern line of attack referred to before, and which operated *viâ* Namengan, soon sapped their strength; Bokhara refused all assistance, and Khiva stood indifferent or over-awed, having herself felt the weight of the Russian arms in 1853. Finally, at the end of 1864, Tashkund was stormed, Khudayar Khan made his peace, and Khokand became a 'de facto' Russian province, and, being kindly treated, and its internal government left alone, a source of strength instead of weakness, and a firm base for the Russian advance.

9. Having reached Tashkund, the Russians rested awhile, busily employed in making it a fit base for operations. They laid down a light line of tramway, constructed fortifications, established markets, encouraged trade, and created vast magazines and depôts. At last, having perfected their arrangements, left strong garrisons, and established excellent relations with the surrounding country, they moved forward, supported by the whole strength of Khokand, against Bokhara, thus developing their eastern attack.

10. Between the Caspian and Aral seas, and east of the latter as far as Khokand, extends a vast desert, south of which

lie Khiva and Bokhara; and consequently the line of communication east from the Caspian to the Aral, and again along the Jaxartes to Khokand, joining the eastern and western lines of operations, is perfectly unassailable from the south while Russia holds those two seas and Khokand. Again, holding Khiva and Bokhara, a central line of operations along the Oxus from the sea of Aral—the route by which Khiva was occupied in 1853—meeting the eastern line at Charjooee, would give another communication with the west by the line of wells which joins the Caspian with the southern points of the sea of Aral, which, being covered to the south by the Turkoman desert, is only assailable to the east by the line of the Oxus from Balkh and Cabul. Again, from Charjooee, making that city (also eminently suited for an entrepôt of commerce) a depôt and place of arms, the eastern attack would easily cross the desert to Merv on the Moorghab by Burn's desert route, which is only 120 miles in length, and on which water is everywhere obtainable within 30 feet of the surface, and would ascend that river on Herat *viâ* Kooshk Robat and Kooshk Assaib, being probably joined *en route* by the western attack by way of Shurukhs, should circumstances render a combined movement preferable to a separate western operation by the Lejend and Heri river.

11. To return to the Russians. After the victory of Karatchi, they advanced to Matuppa without encountering further opposition, and there awaited the Bokariot assault. The Ameer Mozufferoodeen had long expected the movement, and collected his forces to repel it at Samarcand. Abdool Ruhman, Khan of Cabul, and Ferozeshah, the Delhi Shahzada, who so baffled us at Oudh and Central India,* had been with him, but the struggle for the throne of Dost Mahomed called the former away first when most wanted. However, Mozuf-

* This young prince, an enemy formidable from his talents, and his brother Gohur Sultan, were and are seeking support from the Russians against us. We, of course, know what reception they must have met with, but our ill-wishers in India believe as they hope; and this is but one of the ill consequences which we may expect from Russian propinquity, viz. that all the hopes of the discontented of India should centre on them as in A.D. 1800 upon Zeman Shah; how far such is already the case may be gathered from the general tone of bazaar talk and of the native press.

feroodden, accustomed to conquer Khokandese and Khivites, went down to battle with swarms of Tukka Turkomans and Osbeg horsemen, but was worsted in every encounter with ludicrous ease, till at last Juzzak was taken, and the Ameer driven to patching up a dishonourable peace, which the Russians, being not yet ready for more extended operations, were themselves quite ready to grant.

12. A very cursory study of the geography of these countries will render it easy to understand that matters could not long remain in this situation;—the Russians are now hanging over the valley of the Zeruffshan, the most fertile portion of the Shah's dominions, and within easy reach down the valley, of Bokhara itself, thus affording a standing menace to that capital, and a galling insult to the fanatic Millas who swayed its councils; opposite to them lay Samarkand and the direct route to the Oxus through the important city of Karshee, and that once occupied, the command of the Oxus was theirs—their base of operations shifted in one step 500 miles nearer to India.

13. Karshee itself is a city of some 25,000 inhabitants, and of considerable importance both in a commercial and strategic point of view, and is evidently, as Vambèry writes, "likely to play an important part in the transit trade organised between Bokhara, Cabul, and India." It is about fifty miles from Kerkee, on the route to Herat by Audekhooee, and about 90 miles from Kilef on the route to Cabul *viâ* Balkh and Khulm, and fifty miles from it to the eastward, along the Shehr-s-i-subz river, is the large city of Shehr-i-subz, also an active commercial centre, two marches south from Samarcand. Karshee has also two direct routes to Samarcand of fifty and sixty miles respectively, two lines of desert communication which join it to Bokhara and to the Bokhara and Samarcand highroad at Kettee Kurghan, and a direct route east to Koondooz and Budukshan by Shairabod. It is therefore evident why the possession of Karshee should be regarded by Russia as necessary, both as a place of strength against attempts from the eastward to cut in on her line of operations, and also as giving her the command (for Kerkee could always be seized at a moment's notice) of another more and direct route leading in on the Morghab, by Audekhooee and Maimunna, after the advance from Merv had taken the defiles of the Jemshides in reverse.

14. Again, for the development of the western line of

their operations, the possession of Charjooee was absolutely requisite to the Russian leaders: Charjooee masks Bokhara, threatens the Salor and Kara Toorkomans, gives a *point d'appui* one hundred miles nearer than Kerkee, to the true base of operations—the Aral and Caspian seas: to hold it was indispensable before the Oxus could be traversed by flotillas, and there can be no doubt that the route afforded by it for operations against Herat, is the only true one for European armies. For, although the direct Kafila routes are useful to save time, and as supplementary lines of operations, the natural lines of departure from the basin of the Oxus, as the natural lines of approach to the same, are the valleys of the rivers that flow towards it, even though the streams themselves be lost in the desert ere they reach. Thus the Russians desire to move on to the Oxus at Charjooee by the parallel lines of the Zeruffshan and Karshee river, and to leave it by the valley of the Moorghab, all fine open country, with communications protected by deserts on either side; instead of plunging direct into the Kanates by Audekhooee and skirting the dangerous Paropamisus *viâ* Maimunna.

15. When these circumstances are duly considered, it will not be deemed wonderful that, when the Russians had consolidated their acquisitions, operations were commenced, the valley of the Zeruffshan was penetrated, and the eastern portion of it occupied, demonstrations made towards Kerunneh (a city three marches from Bokhara, and important as the point where the Khokand road crosses the Zeruffshan), and Samarcand was occupied by a *coup-de-main*, and, though they abandoned for a time, eventually retained. Ere long Shehr-i-subz, always rival to Bokhara, was detached from the Shah's cause, and the Shah himself was again driven to seek a truce, which gave the Russians a convenient breathing time, and to accede to a treaty which the Emperor has since refused to ratify; and it is probable that ere these pages see light this effete Mussulman kingdom will have been placed on the same footing as Kakand; Karshee, Kerkee, and Charjooee occupied; and the Oxus rendered as much a Russian stream as the Jaxartes; for Khiva, alone and enveloped, and within easy reach of the flotillas on the Aral, has long been completely subservient to the Russian policy.

16. Now, therefore, we observe that the western and eastern

lines of Russian operations have been so far successful, and have met to merge when requisite into an eastern line of movement, both by the Moorghab and by Mainmunna, upon Herat, co-operating with the southern line before-mentioned, as moving from Astrabad through the east of Persia, and up the valley of the Heri river. This latter line would of course be pursued in combination with the Persian Government, but the former, and the prolongation of both lines from their junction towards Hindoostan, are only available by securing the co-operation or submission of the rulers of Cabul; for it is easy to understand that a strong power in possession of both sides of the Paropamisus, could render the acquisition of Herat difficult, and advance south of the line of the Hindoo Koosh almost impossible. For such a power would possess facility for attack on the Russian communications by two lines, one, the well-known route by Maimunna, debouching at Bala Moorghab, and the other by the valley of the Herirood (traversed in a fortnight by Shah Zeman in the teeth of the mountain tribes), rendering impracticable the passage of the Sufedkoh above Herat, or cutting in on the Candahar route below.

17. It cannot be denied, however, that the Persian alliance would enable the Russians, by using the numerous excellent routes through Khorassan on Giraneh, Furrah, and Girrishk, to turn and utterly neutralize the line of the Hindoo Koosh, Koh-i-Baba, and Safed, and Seah Kohs, and place their communication almost out of reach of any flank attack organized from Cabul or Cis-Oxus Turkistan. No such advance, however, could be attempted without the possession of Herat, which would have (under the circumstances supposed) to be striven for on the one old line from Persia, on which attack has so often failed. And even were Herat to be possessed, an advance, further and further from the base, with communications as long as to Subxawar and Nishapoor (for the direct line from Herat could never be kept open) could be successfully opposed at Giraneh, Furrah, or Gurrishk; nor could any advance be made through Seistan till these provinces were occupied—always under the supposition that the forces, strong places, and communications of the Affghan kingdom, were in hands that were capable of using them.

18. In the preceding pages those routes only have been

considered to which Russian operations hitherto have evidently pointed, but as an author of acknowledged weight some time ago stated, that '500 miles of the wildest mountain desert intervened between Herat and Attock,' and that between us and the Oxus was interposed 'the mighty barrier of the Hindoo Koosh and the Kuen Lun which rise like a wall 17,000 feet high, with scarcely a crest or depression throughout their entire extent, none certainly practicable for an army with the material and appliances of war as waged in the 19th century.' The Abyssinian expedition certainly had not then occurred, but as Russian operations in Northern Asia, the Caucasus, and Turkistan, and our own in Nepaul, Cabul, and our hill frontier generally, might have taught the writer just quoted caution, it will not be out of place to give a general specification of the main military and mercantile routes which traverse these countries.

19. Although the basins of the rivers are the usual lines for the operations of armies in Central Asia, caravans after leaving Samarcand *viâ* Bokhara, Karshee, or Shehr-i-subz, strike right across the desert, and are ferried over the Oxus at various points from Kerkee up to Huzrut Isnam. These routes do not need much description. Vast plains of indurated clay, scattered sand-hills, and occasional oases, are their principal features; and a good idea of them may be gathered, by those who have not seen the deserts of Upper India, from Mr. Elphinstone's account of his journey from Delhi through Bikaneer on his way to the Dooranee Court. But the Bokhara plains have this difference from those which the envoy traversed, that in almost every part water is available comparatively near the surface, a fact of incalculable importance when regarding these deserts as barriers to a hostile march.

20. After crossing the Oxus three principal routes traverse the mountain barrier which continues the Himalaya towards the Caucasus; the first leads to Herat for Kandahar and the Bolan Pass, skirts the country of the Feroz Kohis, and penetrating into that of the Jemshidi by the defiles debouching on the Morghab, turns down the Killa now, and crossing the Sufed and Siah Kohs, comes out on Herat *viâ* Kerookh and Gwoosh. The second, from Balkh, enters the hills at the canal heads below Pykandurra, and following the Berber up into Yukunlung, either crosses over to Deh Zangee for Ghuznee and the

valley of the Ab-i-istada, and the route to Dera-Ismael Khan down the banks of the Gomul; or turning east goes to Cabul along either base of the Koh-i-baba. The third, from Kulm, follows the great military road up the river of that name, and goes down to Cabul, for Peshawur or Dera Ismael Khan *viâ* Bameean. Of these routes the first and third should be familiar as household words to the Quartermaster-General's office, having been surveyed and mapped, as have other useful cross routes in the Paropamisus; the third was especially used by the Nadir Shah for great guns in 1728, was reported practicable for siege artillery by our officers in 1840, and has been constantly traversed by the Cabul armies during the last fifteen years. The second, though not so good, is more direct, is constantly travelled by caravans with all their impediments, and could easily be rendered passable by artillery, if not so already.

21. The prolongations to the Indus of all the routes, save that of the Gomul, were held and traversed by ourselves in 1839-42. They all pass down the basins of rivers, save the few marches (through the Bukwa Plain *viâ* Dilaram) that intervene between the Helmund and Furreh; which, however, barren as they are, were traversed by Dost Mahomed with 20,000 men in his march on Herat in 1862; and our agent who accompanied them, stated that no great difficulties were experienced by the troops. And here we may remark that the ranges of the Hindoo Koosh and Koh-i-baba, through continuing the Himalaya and Kuen Lun towards the Caucasus, can by no means be said to join on to even the easternmost branches of that range. For the Safed and Seah Kohs on the east, and the mountains of Mazendrau on the west, leave between them the gap in which stands Herat, and through which armies may march from Charjooee to Quetta, and never cross a hill; and for this reason that city is called, what it has ever proved to the holder, 'the gate of Khorassan,' from which Ghuznee, up the valley of the Heri river, or Candahar, through the country of the Doranees (whom the Barukzai policy has so crushed that not a spark of their warlike qualities remains by which the Gilzis were subdued), or Khelat of the Belochees past the Seistan lake, or Kerman and the Persian Gulf across the plains of Persian Khorassan, can be reached by armies with equal facility. The fact is that the difficulties and dangers of the mere occupation of Affghanistan, or of any portion of it, are

but spectres seen in the ghostly gloom of the Cabul disasters. As in the case of the similar delusions regarding the trackless wastes of Turkistan—which are now being traversed in every direction by the Russian columns. These dangers fade away in the clear light of truth; and people, whose minds are only filled with a vague idea of a tragedy, brought upon our troops by the most marvellous instance recent history can show of the confounding of the councils and strength of man by Providence, will realize this when they have the patience to study the official literature of the campaigns of 1838-42.

CHAPTER II.

AFFGHAN POLITICS.

22. It being thus rendered evident that the possibility of attack upon Hindostan from Persia and Turkistan depends on the power and disposition of those who wield the resources of Cabul, we are naturally led to the consideration of recent events therein, and of our relations with that kingdom; but the history and statistics of Affghanistan and our Affghan frontier have been so exhaustively detailed in a recent pamphlet by Dr. Bellew of the Guides, medical officer to the Candahar mission of 1857 and author of the very interesting work descriptive of the same, that little is needed on my part but a brief summary of the events of the past three years (in which some confusion exists in the pamphlet referred to), and a discussion of their bearing on our past and present policy.

23. In June 1863, the famous Dost Mahomed Khan died before Herat, leaving the amirate to Sher Ali, the son, who was with him, and confirming the Government of Balkh on his elder brother Afzul Khan, the father of Abdool Ruhman, who now holds that province. Mahomed Ameen, whose son Ismael Khan has just deserted from Azim to Sher Ali, was Governor of Candahar, and Azim Khan, the present rival ameer, of Khorrum. Herat was held by Sher Ali's son Yakoob, the young chief, who recently recovered Candahar, and the other Governments were distributed to other sons and grandsons of the Dost. Ere very long the brothers fell out. Sher Ali, at first triumphant, secured Afzul Khan by treachery, and drove Abdool Ruhman and

Azim Khan to take refuge, respectively in Bokhara and Hindostan. In the summer of 1865, Azim Khan, disgusted by what he regarded as a slight put upon himself at Kawulfeindi, again set out on his travels; and going round by Swat, Kashgur and Chitral, crossed the Hindoo Koosh into Budúk-shan, and was joined in Balkh by his nephew Abdool Ruhman, whom he summoned, as before mentioned, from the Ameer of Bokhara's camp at Samarcand. At this juncture, by one of those curious changes of fortune which happen only in Asiatic kingdoms, Feiz Mahomed Khan, the present ruler of Balkh, threw in his lot with the rebels, and, coat-turning being the order of the day, all others who thought themselves insufficiently rewarded for acknowledging Sher Ali, flocked to his standard on their route up the river of Khulm.

24. Sher Ali, in the very hour of success, after having triumphed over and slain his brother, Mahomed Ameen Khan, at Candahar, now formed his troops, his good luck and his senses deserting him together; for the loss of his son Mahomed Ali in that battle completely overwhelmed him, besides disheartening his troops, and depriving him of the best of his officers in the hour of his most urgent need. So by some strange sloth on his part Cabul was not relieved, the Bala Hissar surrendered, and when Ameer Sher Ali at last moved up to Ghuznee to retrieve his luck, it was too late; for the good fortune of the allies culminated in the victory of Shaikhabad in April 1866, and the release of Afzul Khan; and Sher Ali, stripped of everything, took refuge, in May 1866, in the city of Candahar.

25. After this it appears that, either the prudent counsels of Afzul Khan prevailed over the desires of his more fiery son, and led the rebels to consider it best to be content with the possession of the seat of empire, and not to tempt fortune by pressing hastily a desperate man; or, possibly, that victory had disorganized their army, and the rebel chiefs were more eager to share the spoil than to press on through the burning summer to the barren conquests of Gurrishk and Furrah. Be the cause what it might, Sher Ali was left to take breath while the conquerors disputed over the distribution of the Governments. Then resulted what might be expected—either must Afzul Khan strip himself of everything, in the vain attempt to satisfy the cormorant-like appetites of those who had assisted in

placing him on the throne, or break in his prosperity the hundred promises made in his adversity, and render many of his party malcontent. The art was to do this with discretion. But never did Afzul Khan commit a greater mistake than in attempting it with his brother—the most powerful of those who had assisted him—Feiz Mahomed Khan. That chief, when called upon to surrender the province of Balkh to Mahomed Azim Khan, flatly refused, summoned his friends around him, distributed largesses among his troops, and prepared for strenuous resistance; thus effectually distracting attention from Sher Ali who, without men, munitions, or money, was slowly endeavouring to recover his strength, and provide the means of resistance to the hourly anticipated pursuit.

26. At length, however, Abdool Ruhman roused himself from inaction, and, leaving a division to check Feiz Mahomed in the Paropamisus, moved down to contest with the Ameer the possession of Candahar. The latter's unfortunate star aided his young opponent's military genius in undoing the mischief done to Afzul Khan's cause by months of delay, and, after inflicting on the Ameer's army an irretrievable defeat near Mookur in January 1867, Abdool Ruhman marched triumphantly to Candahar; while Sher Ali himself, almost unaccompanied, fled towards his son Yakoob Ali's Government of Herat. After these events Afzul Khan was proclaimed Ameer and acknowledged by us, Candahar and Cabul were in his hands, Herat was denuded of troops, and to subdue Balkh, Afzul Khan's former principality, appeared to be no difficult task; although about this time Afzul's death in August 1867, and the rivalry between his son and brother for the throne (to which Azim eventually succeeded) threatened for a time to break up the rebel faction.

27. At this point the aspect of affairs again changed; Feiz Mahomed, a just and able ruler and of commanding military genius, at the head of a considerable Ozbeg army, and backed by the sympathy of all the Ozbeg Ooloos, had come steadily on towards Bamean, undismayed by the Ameer's reverses, and had driven all opposing troops triumphantly before him; and by the autumn this chief occupied so commanding a position opposite the lines of Bamean, and appeared in so fair a way of taking Cabul by a dash, as that province had been almost denuded of troops by the detachment of a large portion of the

army to Gurrishk, to hold in check both Yakoob Khan, who was threatening from Herat, and a Persian division which had occupied Seistan—that Abdool Ruhman was sent up post haste to take command of the dispirited division of the Paropamisus; and on the other side the ill-omened Sher Ali, confident at last of success, hastened up with his troops from Maimunna, to assist in the anticipated triumphant denouement. But with the presence of Abdool Ruhman another phase of affairs presented itself, Feiz Mahomed, leading his troops to a night surprise of Abdool Ruhman's army, was slain in the moment of victory. As usual, in the hands of Sher Ali, triumph was turned into defeat, and the tide of success, which would have borne him to the throne of Cabul, was thus untowardly stemmed. After this blow Abdool Ruhman was not long in bearing Sher Ali's army back, step by step, through the defiles that give passage to the Khulm River; and by the spring of 1868 he was able to report himself as in possession of Balkh, while Sher Ali, baffled and hopeless, was leading off the wrecks of his army to Herat.

28. While all this was going on, Yakoob Ali Khan had not been idle; negotiations had, in the preceding February, been opened by his father for assistance from Russia and Persia, and now, supported by solid tokens of friendship from the latter and fair words from the Governor-General of Russian Turkistan, he had, with the success which ever attended Sher Ali's army in his own absence, pushed on from Furrah to Gurrishk, and occupied the line of the Helmund; and, while strengthening his own base of operations, had manœuvred to draw out Azim Khan's son Surwur, the Governor of Candahar, from his secure line of operation on the Turnuk, and had awaited with calculating patience any opportunities which might be afforded him by his opponent's mistakes in the field, or by his misgovernment, which was fast alienating the Dooranees. Finally, at the gloomiest period of Sher Ali's fortunes, when even the British Government had given up his chance as hopeless, and had committed themselves to the recognition of Azim by letter, and by the deputation of an agent to his Government; the news arrived that the opportunity long awaited had been found, that Surwur, committing himself to an attack on his young cousin's entrenched position, had been enveloped and crushed; falling back on Candahar, and endeavouring to make a stand,

his pitiless opponent had followed up the thunder-clap stroke after stroke, and had captured Candahar; and that Surwur's whole army, 16,000 strong, with guns and munitions of war, had been compelled to surrender at discretion; while Surwur himself, flying hopelessly northward, and refused admission at Khelat, had found a temporary refuge at Ghuznee.

29. Of course the effect of this news at Cabul was tremendous; Azim Khan, by unrestrained violence in the collection of money had rendered the whole country hostile, and his troops were discontented for want of pay. Abdool Ruhman Khan was entangled among the Oozbeg Khanates, and holding them down only by his immediate presence. He was moreover far from well disposed towards the uncle, who had taken his amirate; and Yakoob Khan, the only Barukgai General that had learnt to follow up a victory, leaving Candahar to be held by Sher Ali, who was hurrying down from Herat, had already occupied Khelat-i-Gilgi without resistance, and was pressing on fast towards Ghuznee.

30. Expresses were immediately sent off to Abdool Ruhman for assistance, and Azim Khan, calling up the troops engaged in repressing Mahomed Oosman Khan at Jellahabad, prepared to move out to his son's support at Ghuznee, but Abdool Ruhman, unable or unwilling to move, only sent, after a considerable delay, a portion of his army under Mahomed Ismael, son of the Mahomed Ameer Khan slain at Candahar, a young chief who, bitterly indignant at Azim Khan's breach of faith in giving his father's government of Candahar, promised to himself, to his own son Surwur, had long secretly meditated treachery, and opened communications with Sher Ali; and, meanwhile, Surwur Khan, unable to maintain his position, had given up Ghuznee to Mahomed Yakoob, who there halted, waiting to be joined by his father ere marching on Cabul.

31. In this juncture no time was to be lost, and Azim Khan, with all available troops, including the Jellalabad division, marched out to meet Sher Ali near Ghuznee; trusting to Mahomed Ismael, who was rapidly approaching, to garrison Cabul, and to hold in check Mahomed Oosman, who, now unopposed, was pressing up from Jellalabad. Mahomed Ismael, however, arriving at Cabul, threw off the mask, and, combining with Oosman Khan, beleaguered Azim Khan's

garrison in the Bala Hissar and soon reduced it to surrender. This news, reaching Azim Khan's army when lying facing that of Sher Ali, produced immediate and rapid defection, and Azim Khan fled towards Turkistan by night, only in time to escape being handed over bound into his brother's power.

32. The present struggle between the sons of Dost Mahomed very much resembles the picture in 'The Last of the Mohicans,' of the death-grapple of 'Le Gros Serpent' and 'Le Renard Subtil,' in which the combatants are so entertwined in an ever-changing whirl of limbs, amid the spray and smoke of dust and leaves arising from their desperate contest, that 'la Longue Carabine' and 'le Cerf Agil,' hanging breathlessly over the combatants to slay the enemy of their friend and father, are unable to accomplish their object; as, each moment that they think they have a fair offer at 'le Renard's' head, there appears in its place 'the striped and, frowning visage of Chingachgook.' The Indian Government certainly differs in an important respect from Hawk-eye, as it is perfectly indifferent to its friend's success or otherwise; but there still remains this much resemblance, that each time that it sees one of the combatants down, and thinks it may safely smite him, it is embarrassed and stultified by finding him again uppermost, like Antæus, refreshed by his fall.

33. For no sooner had we, in 1863, acknowledged our friend Sher Ali as the Dost's successor, and renewed with him the treaties of 1854-56, than in 1866 the defeat of Shaikabad showed us that we had been leaning upon a reed. So when the final victory of Candahar, in January 1867, appeared to have placed Afzul Khan in undisputed possession of power, we wrote congratulating him and acknowledging him in turn as our friend (but regretting our other friend's defeat!) Again, after Feiz Mahomed's death at Gurdun Dewar last winter, when it appeared that Sher Ali was at last finally extinguished, we opened relations with, and sent an agent to, Azim Khan, only to see that agent last September in the very humiliating position of sitting in Cabul waiting to transfer his credentials to another Ameer, and one who owes his amirate to our rivals in Asiatic dominion.

34. Mahomed Ismael Khan, though holding Cabul for Sher Ali, and reading the Kulba in his name, was far from forgetting

the death of his father, slain in single combat with Mahomed Ali, the best and bravest of the sons of the Ameer, who fell at the same moment. He held much aloof from his uncle from the first, and, on finding that his hope of the Government of Candahar was as distant with Sher Ali as it had been with Azim Khan, took little pains to disguise his dissatisfaction and hostility. Meanwhile, Sher Ali was compelled by his necessities to acts fatal to the tranquil retention of his re-acquired kingdom; which otherwise, as Abdool Ruhman showed little inclination to stir in what he regarded as merely Azim Khan's quarrel, he might have long enjoyed in peace. Pressed by poverty, he permitted his nephew, Uslam Khan, to outrage the families of the rebel chiefs, with a view to obtaining the treasures of Beebee Moorwareed (Afzul Khan's widow), he ordered the collection in advance of the revenue of the ensuing year, that of the current one having been realized and carried off by Azim Khan; and he permitted his soldiers, whom he was unable to pay, to live in a great measure upon the people.

35. The result of all this was that Abdool Ruhman, stung to madness by the insults to his family, joined Azim Khan heart and hand, and leaving to that crafty statesman the task of cajoling and keeping down the Oozbeg Ooloos, of which no man was better capable, pushed up every available soldier towards his fortified position at Bamean, and displayed a promptness, energy, and aptitude for war, which electrified the Affghans, accustomed as they were to the slow and desultory campaigns of the previous three years, and which compared not unfavourably even with the lightning-strokes of his cousin Mahomed Yakoob in the summer.

36. Meanwhile, the pressure of public opinion, which had by this time turned, and the tide of which now threatens to force us into the other extreme which led to the Cabul disaster, compelled the home and the Indian Government to some action with regard to Cabul; and advances were made in this view to Sher Ali Khan, which put that unhappy chief in a very unenviable position, parallel, indeed, in many respects to that of Dost Mahomed at the time of Burn's deputation some forty years ago. He felt that we could, if we would, do more for him than any other power; and also that our hostility was infinitely more to be dreaded than that of any other power; at the same time

27159

he was bound by an understanding with Persia and Russia, who had given him tangible assistance where we gave fair words, and by whose aid alone he had been put in a position to achieve these successes. He was, moreover, being watched openly by the Persian envoy, and secretly by the Russian agent detailed to accompany him; and an immediate pressure was being put upon him by the Persian division occupying Lekoosha in Seistan (a position dominant on the communications between Affghanistan and Herat), by an ostensibly friendly Persian force, which, by his own permission, was moving directly on Herat itself, and also by the dalliance maintained by the Russian generals in Bokhara with his brother and nephew, which was a standing threat of the support given to him being transferred to them. Finally, as in Dost Mahomed's case, with all these positives against him on our side all was negative: and it appeared more than probable that, after long delays and protracted negotiations, at a period when time was life to him, he might fail after all to obtain any tangible support from the Indian Government.

37. So the negotiations to meet the Viceroy at Peshawur fell through, and meanwhile Abdool Ruhman's tempestuous course brought him down to within four marches of Cabul; but Yakoob Khan, with every available soldier from Cabul, occupied a strong position across his course, and the Khan of Maimunna behind him was pressing hard upon Azim Khan. Defeat was ruin when cut off by so stout a foe, so that experienced leader, refusing the contest has, by a flank movement—along the route before described as leading from Deh Zangi to Ghuznee—cut off his communications with Balkh, and aimed at the establishment of a new base by the capture of either Ghuznee or Candahar. Yakoob Khan has followed by the regular road, but is not likely to commit himself to a battle without a certainty of victory, which his opponent is equally unlikely to afford; and it is more than possible that Abdool Ruhman may yet establish himself in so good a position as for the last time to give us the opportunity of obtaining, by intending support to either party in their need, the footing in Cabul which is necessary to our tranquillity and prestige, and which neither party, if once placed by Russian and Persian, and in undisputed possession of the country, is at all likely without pressure to allow us; and the

necessity of obtaining which would hereafter compel us to the military occupation advocated by the aggressive party, in the train of which would follow difficulties to whose gravity and extent it is difficult to foresee a limit.

CHAPTER III.

INTERVENTION IN CABUL,—ITS FEASIBILITY,—ITS NECESSITY,—MILITARY OCCUPATION,—THE STATE OF OUR OWN RESOURCES,—POLICY ADVOCATED,—WILL OF PIERRE LE GRAND.

38. Having now detailed, as fully as practicable in a work of this nature, the rise and progress of the Cabul question, and described its accessory features, it remains only to discuss shortly the mistakes of our past, and the aims of our future policy. And this is the more necessary as the writer who, through periods when Russia's progress in Central Asia was regarded with the indifference of utter ignorance on all subjects connected with those countries, or again when confused notions of Russian victories led to sage discussion about the opening up of Central Asia, or subsequently when the warning tone of a portion of the press led to scornful reference to insurmountable physical obstacles, and our Cabul disasters,—has never ceased to urge the necessity of an early and moderate intervention; now finds the class to which he belongs, occupying a position which not unfrequently befalls the advanced guard in any change of public opinion—viz., that of being left in the lurch.

39. A great change has of late been working in the views of the public at home with regard to our relations with Central Asia. The non-intervention cry, bred of defeat and disaster, and the reluctance to pass, even in thought, the mountain barrier behind which we once paid the penalty of rashness and folly, have died away. Thinking people have begun to see, that, whereas uncalled-for interference in 1838 in the affairs of Khorassan, a country separated from us by two kingdoms, and having no connexion whatever with our politics, was an unpardonable error which met the punishment it deserved, assistance afforded to a friendly sovereign to heal the wounds of civil discord, and to consolidate his power so as to show an

imposing front to all enemies from without, is necessary and praiseworthy—is, indeed, what under less stringent necessity was, and would be, considered justifiable in the case of the Ottoman Empire, an ally whose interests are by no means so identical with those of Great Britain, as those of British India and Khorassan.

40. The first sign of this change was the movement to encounter Russia commercially in Central Asia. Reluctantly admitting that England and Russia are rivals in the East, and that the political supremacy of a European power among peoples closely allied in feelings and religion to those we govern, is likely to be the death of that prestige by which we exist, the Government at last permitted the initiation of relations with Chinese Turkistan, and accorded a languid recognition to the importance of events fast succeeding each other beyond the Hindoo Koosh, so far as to send two or three spies to watch them; it even addressed friendly letters alternately to the victorious Ameers, and directed the Ambassador at the Court of Persia to inquire the meaning of the movements in Seistan.

41. But at the present moment when Russian possession of the Oxus is a fact; and Affghanistan, brought to the last gasp by the struggle which for the last three years we have permitted to continue, is on the point of succumbing to her own and (which is synonymous) Persian influence; when the extraordinary facilities possessed by our Asiatic rival for disturbing the peace of Hindoostan are acknowledged, and her probable motive with reference to her designs on Turkey understood; and when the public, awaking with a start to the comprehension of a danger which looks, as is usual in such cases, larger and nearer even than it is, has perceived that by making Affghanistan our own, both Russia and Persia would have been held at a distance, thus avoiding the necessity of meeting in haste half-a-dozen pressing military questions, and vastly increasing our military expenditure,—and that the frontier complications which under an over-anxiety to keep things smooth have grown yearly more serious, while our prestige has proportionably declined, might have beeen completely put an end to by thus placing the tribes of Suliman range between two fires;—at such a time measures, such as the establishment of one or two fairs,

the deputation of an officer to Ladakh, and the despatch of a Lahore Pundit as a spy to Budukshan, are not likely to satisfy a public now thoroughly alarmed.

42. The consequence has been that views like those of General Jacob now again brought forward by the Scind authorities—advocating the occupation of Quetta, and the holding of the Bolan pass, and those so ably supported by Dr. Bellew, as before mentioned, and which contemplate a similar proceeding with reference to Jellalabad and the Khaiber,—supported as they are by the generally aggressive tone of the masterly articles in the *Saturday Review*, are threatening to carry all before them, and to turn the ruinous extreme of 'masterly inactivity into the equally ruinous one of intemperate haste;' the more so that the wise course adopted at last by the Government of India, has been prevented by its tardiness from obtaining immediate success.

43. At the same time there is no doubt that, if Government really now lends its efforts to the attachment of Sher Ali to its interests, it will succeed, and will thus deprive the party of (military) action of all excuse for urging a line of policy which it justly reprobates. In short, *now*—late indeed but better than never—is the time for the adoption of that 'buffer' policy which has been urged upon Government for the last three years, as the only one which can put it out of Russia's power to harm us, without necessitating an increase of our armaments, or again attempting the ruinous experiment of a military occupation,—the occupation of a country whose fanatic and poverty-stricken population are with difficulty held down by their own natural rulers, and hardly yield a sufficient revenue to maintain even their native Government.

44. The necessity and the feasibility of our immediate diplomatic intervention in the affairs of Cabul, and the grave disadvantages attending any extension of our military occupation into that country, must be all equally evident to those who will study the various phases of this question as detailed in the preceding chapters. Many causes combine to render the task of obtaining political ascendancy over the Affghans easier to us than to the Russians. The exasperation aroused by our occupation has died away. The remembrance of our probity and liberality survives —kept ever green by the intimate connexion existing between

their country and our own. Our rule, with its security, its strength and justice, its wealth and open-handedness, is conspicuous and attractive as their mountains, and, as in them, its very defects are softened by distance and beauty. The Affghans could find it in their hearts even to wish for our sway; they certainly long with intense desire for our support, our guidance, and our gold.

45. The Russians, on the other hand, are diplomatists of another stamp. Too poor to use gold, and too strong to need it, they have hitherto regarded great guns as their best politicals, and have marched with the resistless stride of a colossus to their goal. Assimilating themselves, more than we, to the Asiatics, they have failed to the same extent as ourselves, in gaining the respect commanded by the Europeans. They are undoubtedly at present regarded in Khorassan with unmitigated fear and aversion, and to use that fear and aversion, whereby to hold that country against them, should be our task. For we may regard it as certain that no amount of dislike alone will enable the Affghans to resist Russian absorption. Have Khokand and Bokhara felt no dislike? Were not the Crescentades now threatened by Affghanistan attempted again and again by those countries? And yet are they not now as completely under Russian influence and power as any portion of Russian Turkistan? Finding, too, on closer acquaintance that the exchange from their own weak and savage governments to one firm and civilized, is by no means so bad as they imagined?

46. Moreover, it is improbable that the process of absorption in the case of Khorassan will at all resemble the complete and summary one adapted towards the more accessible and less defensible countries that lie between the Jaxartes and Oxus. We already see how different are the steps that are being taken. Russia herself hardly appears. A Mussulman potentate, the Shah of Persia, who possesses a show of reason for his claims, is thrown on to districts, the possession of which commands western Khorassan, and a principal route to the Indus. The rightful lord of Cabul, recognised by a strong party in that kingdom, is made a friend with as little active demonstration as possible. Intrigue, not violence, is the *modus operandi*, and, ostentatious interference being carefully avoided, no opening is afforded for the transmission to St. Petersburg of the warning note upon

which Lord Palmerston always depended as his *dernier ressort*. Indeed, at the pass that matters have been allowed to reach, the warning is much more likely to be transmitted from St. Petersburg to St. James', should we commence adopting the aggressive measures that are now meeting favour with the public.

47. Of course every day's delay has rendered our task more difficult in this game of Central Asia politics. Two years ago, when the writer counselled the support of their ally, Russia had no party in Affghanistan. Still struggling on the head-waters of the Kobik, she had not, and never need have, obtained command of the Hamoon Daria (Oxus). Two years ago in Persia columns were massed on Meshed, or proceeding to take over possession of Herat, or watching events at Sekooha inside the very border of Gurmsel. Interference at that time would have alleviated the very chance of a struggle. We should at that time, as the writer repeatedly urged, have openly afforded to Sher Ali assurance of support, and at once have put Khorassan affairs into the hands of an able officer, leaving him to his own unfettered discretion as to the method of strengthening the Ameer, and extending our own influence while conciliating the Affghans and Hazaras. This officer should have been empowered to afford ample assistance to the Cabul Government in fortifying the country and organizing the troops, supplying it with money and materials to that end, and should have been furnished also with a sufficient staff of officers through whom to carry out his measures.

48. We should at the same time have declared to Russia our intention of guaranteeing the integrity of the Affghan kingdom, our old ally; and have forthwith driven back Persia from Herat and Seistan, by a diplomatic note if possible, but, if not, by an expedition. Having thus exerted our legitimate influence over those whom for our safety we *must* have on our side, we might have again resumed our giant repose, with the assurance that, whatever were the European complications, we should remain undisturbed. We might thus have felt that, while to every legitimate extent the path of commerce and civilization had been smoothed, the dreadful barbarisms of Turkistan swept away, and facilities afforded for an honourable and profitable rivalry in Central Asia to the Russians and ourselves, we had impregnably hedged from attack, what Richmond Shakespeare

called, our 'Garden India,' and had saved from a peril worse than sudden attack our great work of civilizing southern Asia.

49. For us now to obtain the position and influence which we should have thus secured two years ago, will, of course, cost incalculably more time, money, and effort than would there have been necessary; nevertheless, it is yet perfectly feasible; and, though Balkh itself must probably become, what physically indeed it is, an integral position of (Russian) Turkistan, there is no reason whatever why the great Caucassian range, called in Persian the 'Tirbund' or boundary of invasion, should not yet be made the barrier and boundary between Russian political supremacy and our own.

50. The necessity of intervention, however, more than its feasibility, is the point yet disputed by the Indian Government, notwithstanding that that government is aware that Sher Ali's difficulty in meeting the tardy advances which he had before so eagerly courted, was owing solely to his being bound to Persia and Russia by engagements, to permit of the performance of which will be to stultify the policy of forty years, and run counter to the deliberate opinions of two generations of statesmen.

51. It is a curious study for those who deprecate a false security, to compare the various arguments successively put forward in favour of non-interference, by parties with more or less knowledge of the subject. The advocates of this policy may be classed under three heads:—1. Those who court the advance of Russia as friend and joint arbiters of Asia. 2. Those who regard all suspicion of danger from that quarter as chimerical; and 3. Those who anticipate eventual aggression, but would await it near home; saying in the words of the *Spectator*, in an article published early in 1867: 'It is our business as strategists to draw Russia from her base—not to let her drag us—and our base is the sea.' The first two clauses, whose arguments were the result of ignorance, did but little harm. On the third—those who knew better, rests a terrible responsibility—the responsibility of those who, by crying Peace, Peace, when there was no peace, have caused the waste of time and opportunities which it will require great exertions and great sacrifices now to retrieve. But even this ground being no

longer tenable, this party (who might assume the Manxman's motto, 'Quocunque jeceris stabit'), have now assumed a fourth and last position: no longer denying the necessity of action, they merely advocate its procrastination until too late; and, urging that we are now arrived at our natural boundaries, and disregarding our own and Russian experience, that, for the strong and weak natural boundaries do not exist, say that to overpass them may commit us to a course, the end of which no one can foresee, and advise that we should yet wait and watch the course of events.

52. 'The neglect of family lessons and hereditary experience is of all things hardest to pardon in a ruler,' writes Palgrave of Abbas Pasha. And of a truth it must be either consummate sagacity or a blind hardihood that we show, when we forsake the policy of fifty years, and advocate awaiting in a conquered territory, teeming with discontent, the danger which the foresight of great statesmen has ever endeavoured to keep distant from our doors. Junot, after the battle of Vimiera, turned pleasantly off the somewhat indiscreet question of an English guest as to why he had fought Sir Arthur in his position, by saying, 'C'est, mon cher, parceque j'aime mieux donner l'assaut que d'être attaqué.' In the application of this principle lies the secret of our successes in the East. The initiative is in itself a declaration of superiority, and is understood as such by Asiatics. It has besides the advantage of removing the battle-field from our own doors,—not that we are contemplating hostile advance or anticipating battle-fields. The course long advocated by the writer, and the adoption of which sooner or later is a certainty, is the best guarantee against such misfortunes. We are simply in view of sentiments so mischievous as those of the writer in the *Spectator*, taking a cursory glance at what may be expected when we have 'dragged down Russia to our base on the sea,' with the view of manifesting by contrast that the antiquated policy is not necessarily the inferior one which preferred 'donner l'assaut.'

53. Suppose us to have allowed events to go on their own way for another year on the other side of the Khyber, employing ourselves meanwhile no more profitably than at present; completing certainly the Peshawur, Sindh, and Rajputana railroads, but wasting lakhs on forts, while neglecting our frontier

communications, and utterly indifferent to the necessity of organizing, equipping, increasing, and rendering popular our native army. Suppose Persia in firm occupation of Herat and Seistan, and Russian schemes meanwhile perfected at leisure throughout Chinese Turkistan and Thibet, and her influence dominant in Affghanistan with the Ameer, who owes to her his position. And then suppose, as announced to come on an early date for positively the last time, 'The Eastern Question.'

54. What is the Eastern Question? Dressed by Russia for the European palate, it has many shapes, but stripped of all adventitious garnishing it is this. Is Russia, or is she not, to have the Turkish seaboard, and be mistress of the inland seas? On this Eastern question rests the soundness of all reasoning for and against Central Asian interference; and, from the contracted view which led them to look only to Russian movements in Central Asia, and not to this question as the mainspring of action which causes Russian movements in Central Asia, have arisen the mistakes of the first two classes of the anti-progress party. For if the Russian ultimatum is one to which England can never agree, what becomes of our alliance and joint arbitration of the destinies of Asia? And if the object of Russian activity on the Oxus is only secondarily trade and territorial aggrandisement, and primarily a political and military check upon ourselves with reference to the Eastern question, where are those who argue against the probability of her extending her dominion and influence, on considerations of the non-expediency *per se* of such extension to the south?

55. Suppose us then, in the circumstances before described, brought to look on this Eastern question;—compelled either to sacrifice the Ottoman empire, or to do battle, we and our allies, against Russia and her allies in Asia and Europe;—and then let us examine the position for war in which 'masterly inactivity' will have placed us. Along our whole frontier will be nations either actively hostile like Cabul, sore and arrogant like Nepaul, or ready to 'shout with the largest crowd,' and attack any country affording any prospect of plunder, like the Northwest-frontier tribes and Turkoman and Tartar hordes. Behind us will be our great feudatories, whose attitude under Russian manipulation may be judged from the present temper of Cashmere, Scindih, and the Nizam.

56. We shall have our own base certainly, and lines of operations, the sea and the railway; and this argument for fighting at home would be unanswerable were we a united India fighting for our hearths and homes, instead of being an alien race, having with one hand a large anarchical or actively hostile element to hold down, while opposing, with little sympathy from the body of our subjects, a formidable foreign foe. But the impolicy, under existing circumstances, of fighting among our own towns and cantonments and our ryots' villages, marching and counter-marching over the fertile tracts that our own granary and treasury seems so obvious, so much like opening the gates of a fortress and letting in the enemy to fight inside, that it is hardly worthy of argument. The position of affairs which would result may be easily estimated from the history of the attitude of India when Zeman Shah was expected in the beginning of this century. It only needs to study the history of each successive attack on the rulers of India from the west to observe the same spectacle, thousands on thousands flocking to the invaders' standard, though indifferent to his success, save as affording them an opening for plunder; scenes of insurrections favouring him by diversions in the defenders' rear, on the part of those who only see in the *bouleversement* an opportunity for obtaining their own ends.

57. The feasibility and necessity of intervention being thus demonstrated, it remains to point out the disadvantage of such intervention being otherwise than diplomatic, and the grave mistake of the course which is now advocated by those who, leaving writers like the present one altogether behind, are in haste to commit themselves to the folly so bitterly repented by Lord Auckland thirty years ago, and so justly condemned ever since by statesmen the least addicted to the opposite extreme of 'masterly inactivity.' In his resistance to the pressure to interfere in a military form in Affghanistan, put upon him by the various classes who have everything to hope from a movement of the sort, and in his determination to regard our present frontier as the best possible for strategic purposes, the party that hold the views of the writer has throughout supported Sir John Lawrence, and has ever combated the idea of aggressive operations, the difficulties in the way of which (always merely pecuniary) are just as formidable now as in 1841, when Lord

Auckland was rescued from inevitable bankruptcy by disasters ascribable only to the direct intervention of Providence, so little necessity or reason does there appear for their occurrence.

58. The fact is, that although the political and financial blindness of that period have been utterly lost sight of in the tremendous reverses which befell our arms, the correspondence of the years 1838-42 is full of instruction in the present position of affairs. Events are now repeating themselves, the short-sighted diplomacy which in 1830-32 rejected the opportunity of making Dost Mahomed a friend and Affghanistan a bulwark, and in 1838 attempted to repair the error by a military occupation, thus rendering the people and their rulers suspicious ever since, and burying our treasure, our armies, and our prestige in a country we never could have retained, has been in a fair way of being repeated; and the throwing away successively of the fairest opportunities of bringing Affghanistan under our own influence, has gone a good way to throwing that kingdom into the hands of others, and leading again to the adoption of the views of a party for whom the events of the darkest lustrum in Indian history (1838-42) have no instruction.

59. Of course I do not assert that the military difficulties now exist which existed in 1837-42, when the country was unknown, our base was a great distance off, and our communications lay through two unfriendly kingdoms. I fully admit that nothing could be easier than to occupy even the whole of Affghanistan, and to retain it—with plenty of troops. But the strain is more than the empire can bear. I maintain, in the words of the dispatch of the Governor-General in Council to the Commander-in-Chief, dated 15th March, 1842, that 'the possession of Affghanistan would be a source of weakness rather than of strength in resisting the invasion of any army from the west.' I repeat that the only course to pursue, if it be still possible, is the one so consistently advocated by the writer—the 'buffer' policy. That policy lies in supporting, strengthening, and advising the ruler of Cabul by means of subsidies, gifts of munitions of war, and by the deputation to his court of envoys with the position, power, and purse of Elphinstone in 1807. By these means we should put that ruler in a position to hold his own against all comers,—should restore our prestige and popu-

larity so wantonly thrown away, and should put an end for ever to our yearly border complications, by giving us an ally, able, and willing to assist in repressing them, by taking the hostile tribes in reverse.

60. The scope of this policy was thus defined by the writer as early as February, 1867, and *mutatis mutandis* the views expressed then are equally applicable now,—as was said not long ago by the greatest living authority on Central Asian matters: 'we must set our house in order.' Our railways must be completed, frontier communications improved, the Indus bridge and branch lines pushed up to the mouths of the two great passes. Our native troops, too, must be re-armed,—if an army cannot be trusted it should not be kept, but if kept it should be rendered efficient, and the best of arms should be supplied to troops who may have to cross bayonets with an army, as well disciplined, as well led, and equally well supported by European battalions. And last, and most important, we should endeavour by every means in our power by employing our best politicals with ample powers, and long purses—to recover, as we can yet easily do, our lost ascendancy in Asia, and especially in Affghanistan. Afzul Khan, or Sher Ali, would rather even now, throw themselves into our arms than those of Russia. Cabul or Herat at this moment are more completely in our power than even Balkh in that of the Russians, and the virtual possession of either (without military occupation) would effectually bar any advance by the other. The mere name of our support would be sufficient to make each rebellious Affghan Khan slink quietly home to his castle, and would restore our ally, Sher Ali, a confirmed friend, for life, to his throne of Cabul. And Herat, under our management and advice, would thus stand our impregnable outpost, and say to Persian and Russian, as plainly as it could speak, 'Thus far and no further.'

61. The details and method of the diplomatic action advocated in the preceding extract cannot be better explained than by giving (Appendix A) the draft of a despatch, which after the defeat of Sher Ali at Candahar, and when, in the beginning of 1867, our impassiveness drove him, as it drove his father before him, to seek that assistance elsewhere by which he has recovered his throne, was supposed by the writer to be probably on its way to the Viceroy from Sir Stafford Northcote, and the outline of

which, adapted to the present circumstances and to the greatly increased difficulty of the position at the present moment,—which may necessitate a more menacing attitude to Russia and Persia, and a greater display of strength towards Affghanistan,—must still be that adopted, if we are to come through the present political crisis without the greatest danger to our position and prestige in the East.

62. 'On the other hand' (in the words of the present writer used a year and a half ago), 'if we procrastinate and let matters stand over till we are seriously threatened; and the British public, roused, demands that immediate measures be taken for the protection of our Indian Empire; and then all Cabul being under Russian political influence, we are compelled to secure our own safety by militarily occupying the important points of the country, thus affording to Russia the *casus belli*, the onus of which would now rest upon her, — the whole popular feeling, which we might now so easily turn against Russia and Persia, will be turned against ourselves; and we shall have to hold those portions of the Cabul kingdom, the retention of which would be requisite for the security of our dominions, with the strong hand *against* the Affghan nation' (an operation the burden of which during two years only was fast crushing us, when thirty years ago the Cabul disasters so providentially released us) 'instead of by timely use of diplomacy, money, and tact, being enabled to do so in co-operation with, and by means of that warlike and turbulent people.' Now, however, that we have so procrastinated, and that the prediction of August, 1867, is being verified in January, 1869, let us only hope that a larger policy in the new year, may, by a prompt and liberal action, cut away the ground from beneath the feet of the advocates of the dangerous measures anticipated and deprecated in the above extract.

63. Besides political considerations, there is another most important subject, to which, however, space will not permit of any but the most cursory reference; and that is, whether the strength and equipment of our army are suited for a great campaign, or even adequate to an occupation, regarding which, after three years' experience, Sir J. Nicolls wrote in January 24th, 1842: 'No doubt your Lordship can cause our army to force its way to Cabul if you think our name and predominance in

India cannot otherwise be supported, but our means are utterly insufficient to insure our dominion over that country.' As the present writer observed in an article of August, 1867, 'were the line of conduct we have so long advocated to be at once adopted, this question might be of less immediate importance; but as it is, as it appears possible that the *laissez aller* policy may yet be continued, and that we shall "wait and see," till we see Sher Ali by Russian support fixed firmly on the throne of Cabul, and Herat, by a fair exchange made over to the Persian Shah, it is as well to immediately examine what military means are at our disposal.'

64. Sir Herbert Edwardes, in a memorandum written in 1858, regarding the report of General Sumsden's Candahar mission, makes the following reference to this important subject:— 'One reason that we had for removing our struggle with Russia as far from India as possible, has, please God, been removed by the convulsions of 1857-58; our internal power in India must now be placed *on the basis of conquest*, and, *if secure, in our reorganization*' (the italics are my own), 'we need not fear the announcement of an European enemy in the defiles of Affghanistan.' But, since this was written, nine years of drifting have shown our inadequacy to the reorganization on which these views were based; and it cannot now but be self-evident that, with a native army armed so as to be incapable of contending on equal terms with frontier matchlock-men, and so weak that a difficulty in Huzara draws regiments from Delhi and disturbs the whole Punjab, and an expedition against an obscure African potentate causes an augmentation of the entire army; so insufficiently officered that a short campaign necessitates the supplementing of the regimental staff with a body of strange officers, whose ignorance of and indifference to the regiment is reciprocal; with a large and dangerous military police; with troubles looming large among the great Hindoo States, and an inelastic revenue barely adequate to the barest requirements of peace; and, finally, with India perhaps more restless and uneasy than at any period since the threatened descent of Zeman Shah. With all these and other disadvantages against us, no man could now venture to assert that we could disregard the announcement of an enemy in the defiles of Affghanistan, or in the passes of the Paropamisus either.

65. The weakness of our army is a defect speedily remediable as regards infantry who do not take long to train; with cavalry it is another matter, and the paucity of this important branch in the last Cabul war, completely crippled the efforts of our best troops, as is shown in General Nott's despatches. But would any one credit that, when in 1841 Sir William Macnaghten and Sir Jasper Nicolls, at different times, wrote as follows:—'We have learned, by the experience of this rebellion, one important fact, which is, that our regular European and Hindustanee troops fight against Affghans, in their own native hills, to a great disadvantage. The superior agility of the latter enables them to evade pursuit, and their jezails or long guns, carry with dreadful precision, to a distance where our muskets are harmless;' and 'experience appears to show that the use of weapons, such as are wielded by this class of the Affghan soldiery, would be of great value in aid of the ordinary arms of our troops in all operations in mountain defiles;'—that nevertheless at the present moment the Indian army possess a weapon less effective than the 'Brown Bess' of those days. But so it is, and during the Umbeyla campaign, native regiments were continually compelled to indent on the European ones for a score or so of marksmen to protect them from enemies whom their pop-guns could not reach.

66. Now, having to the best of his ability accurately detailed the facts, and without bias deduced the conclusions, appertaining to a question which affects the European and Asiatic policy of Great Britain alike, the writer brings to a close a discussion which has already transgressed the limits he had originally proposed. To quote the 'Friend of India's' comment, appended to an article written by him at the time, when the defeat of Feiz Mahomed had given the Government another opportunity of reconsidering its policy, by affording support to Abdool Ruhman Khan: 'In all this we counsel nothing more than a return to the policy which gave peace to our frontier, and kept the rest of Central Asia in check for the last twenty-five years of Dost Mahomed's life. That policy was just, was honourable, was cheap and was successful. A terrible responsibility rests upon those in England who have departed from it, and upon those in India, who, after so ably carrying it out, have been tempted to sacrifice the present national honour and future

ecurity which it involves to the materialism and meanness of party who would live by bread alone.

67. Finally, and to clench his other arguments, the writer ppends *in extenso*, a curious document not generally known, t which deserves the British public's most attentive considera-on :—

Extrait du Testament du Czar Pierre le Grand.

'Le grand Dieu, de qui nous tenons notre existence et notre ronne nous ayant constamment éclairé de ses lumières et soutenu son divine appui, me permet de regarder le peuple Russe appelé ns l'avenir, à la domination générale de l'Europe. J'ai trouvé la ssée rivière, je la laisse fleuve ; mes successeurs en feront une nde mer destinée à fertiliser l'Europe. C'est pourquoi je leur laisse enseignements suivants ; je les recommande à leur attention et à r observation constante. Entretenir la nation Russe dans un état guerre continuelle, pour tenir le soldat aguerri et toujours en eine. Ne le laisser reposer que pour améliorer les finances de at, refaire les armées, choisir les moments favorables pour taque, faire ainsi servir la paix à la guerre et la guerre à la paix s l'interêt de l'aggrandissement et de la prospérité croissante de la ssie. *Appeler, par tous les moyens possibles, de chez les peuples ruits de l'Europe, des capitaines pendant la guerre, et des savants dant la paix, pour faire profiter la nation Russe des avantages autres pays, sans lui rien faire perdue des siens propres.* ndre part en toute occasion aux affaires et démêlés quelsconques l'Europe, et surtout à *ceux de l'Allemagne*, qui *plus rapprochée resse plus directement. Diviser la Pologne, en y entretenant le ble et des jalousies continuelles ; gagner les puissantz à prix d'or, rrompre et influencer les diètes*, afin d'avoir action sus les élec-s des Rois, *y faire nommer ses partisans ; les protéger ; y faire er les troupes Moscovites, et y sejourner ; jusqu'à l'occasion d'y* EURER TOUT A FAIT. *Prendre le plus qu'on pourra à la Suède, avoir se faire attaquer par elle pour avoir pretexte de la sub-uer—pour cela, l'isoler du Danemark et le Danemark de la Suède ntretenir avec soin leurs rivalités. Prendre toujours les épouses princes Russes parmi les Princesses d'Allemagne, pour multiplier alliances de famille, rapprocher les interêts et unir d'ellemême llemagne à notre cause—en y multipliant notre influence s'étendre s relâche vers le nord le long de la Baltique, et vers le sud le g de la mer noire—approcher le plus possible de Constantinople es Indes. Celui qui y regnera sera* LE VRAI SOUVERAIN DU MONDE.

En conséquence susciter des guerres continuelles tantôt au T
tantôt à la Perse, *rechercher et entretenir avec soin l'allianc*
l'Autriche, appuyer en apparence ses idées de Royauté future
l'Allemagne, et exciter contre elle par dessous main la jalousi
Princes, tâcher de faire réclamer par les uns où par les autre
secours de la Russie, *et exercer sur le pays une espèce de prote*
qui *prépare la domination future. Intéresser la maison d'Aut*
à chasser le Turc de l'Europe, et neutraliser ses jalousies, *lors*
conquête de Constantinople soit en lui suscitant une guerre av
anciennes Etats de l'Europe, *soit en donnant une partie*
conquête, ce qu'on lui reprendra plus tard. S'attacher et r
autour le soi tous les Grecs, Schismatiques ou désunis, qui
répandus, soit dans la Hongrie, soit dans la Turquie, soit da
Midi de la Pologne; se faire leur centre, leur appui, et é
d'avance une prédominance universelle par une espèce d'autoc
ou de Suprématie Sacerdotale.

APPENDIX A.

Extract of a supposed Despatch from the India Office to the Viceroy, in August 1867, *referred to at page* 33.

1. I have the honour to acknowledge your despatch of the 1st August, regarding the present aspect of our diplomatic relations with Cabul and Central Asia.

2. In it you announce the final cession of the city and province of Herat by the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, as anticipated by you in previous despatches on the same subject, to the Shah of Persia, or, in other words, to Russia, in consideration of such assistance in money and arms, as may be necessary to place him on the throne of Cabul. Also, the movement in the direction of the ceded territory of a division of the large Persian army collected at Meshed, a division of which had, as previously detailed by you, occupied Seistan, in contravention at the treaty of 1856; and the assembly at Kerkee and Charjooee, both important strategical points on the Oxus, of considerable bodies of Russian troops: the former stated to be for frontier protection, with reference to the distracted state of the Cabul kingdom; the latter, collected with the avowed object of, in conjunction with the Persian forces in Meshed, overawing and reducing to subjection to Persia the various tribes of the Turkomans between the Huri river and the Moorghab.

3. You state that, in the opinion of your Government, the time for our interference in the affairs of Cabul, with a view to the protection of our own interests and the securing of the safety and tranquillity of our Indian Empire, has now absolutely arrived, and that early and vigorous measures, some of the principal of which you detail, are forthwith requisite to prevent the establishment by Russia of a commanding influence on our immediate frontiers, which, in the event of any European complications, might prove seriously embarrassing to the Home Government.

4. The possession of Herat by a neutral power has always been regarded as of the utmost importance to the safety of our Indian possessions, and the British Government have twice interfered to maintain such possession by force of arms, and to prevent the occupation of this important position by the Persian troops, which has been justly regarded as tantamount to its falling into the hands of Russia.

5. Her Majesty's Government can see no reason now for relin-

quishing the policy of its predecessors, or for dissenting from the views of the various able statesmen who have at all times advocated that policy. The position of Herat on the lines of advance from Persia and Turkistan towards the Indus, and occupying that gap in the line of the Hindoo Koosh, and its continuation through which along that river can be reached without encountering serious physical obstacles, has caused its possession, from the time of Darius to the present, to be made a necessary prelude to military operations against Hindoostan; and to prevent such occupation by any power capable of such operations must, therefore, undoubtedly be regarded by the rulers of Hindoostan as a policy to be maintained at any cost.

6. But the present juncture appears to Her Majesty's Government to present an even more important aspect than the mere occupation of Herat by a great military power. Such an occupation appears likely, in this instance, to be accompanied by a complete ascendancy of that power over the councils of kingdoms, whose frontier for distance of many hundred miles runs contiguous with our own.

7. In 1838, when Russia was still very distant from our Indian possessions, and had obtained no footing whatever in Turkistan, it was regarded as advisable by Lord Palmerston's Government to counteract her influence in Cabul even at the cost of a military occupation, which, our own territories being separated from those of Cabul by the kingdoms of the Punjaub and Sind, was difficult and costly in the extreme. Whatever may be the opinions on the policy of that interference then, or of the mode adopted, now, at all events, the very altered state of circumstances, both the Russian possessions and our own being conterminous with the Cabul kingdom, renders the expediency of initiating measures, to increase our influence in that country beyond question.

8. It is hoped that the communications of Her Majesty's Government to those of Russia and Persia on the subject of Seistan and Herat will be attended with such results as will render any further action in those respects as unnecessary; nevertheless, with a view to being prepared for all contingencies, and with reference to the probable detention of a large portion of the Bombay army during the ensuing year in Abyssinia, it is advisable that, as proposed by you, the Commander-in-Chief in India should be addressed on the subject of dispensing troops, so as to be available for collection at Kurrachee on short notice, and the Lords of the Admiralty have also been requested to strengthen the squadron in the Persian Gulf, as recommended by your Excellency.

9. The proposals of your Government as to the means to be adopted for strengthening our influence in Cabul have met with the entire approval of Her Majesty's Government, and should be put in effect as early as possible. The principal details of the scheme, as laid down by you, are:—

(1.) To acknowledge Afzul Khan as the Ameer of Cabul, and his son Sirdar Abdool-Ruhman Khan as the heir apparent.

(2.) To depute an envoy and minister to the Court of the Ameer with full powers, under instructions conveyed by your Government, with an envoy subordinate to him for Herat, to the recovery of which place the Ameer's attention would be imperatively directed, other political agents being despatched to the Kohistan, Candahar, &c.

(3.) To renew to Ameer Afzul Khan the subsidy of rupees, 1 lac per mensem, which was granted to the late Ameer Dost Mahomed, and to supply him also with such further assistance in money and material as may be necessary to place his Government on a strong footing, on condition of his consenting to the fortification by our engineers of such strategic points as may be deemed of importance; such fortifications to be ordinarily held by the Cabul army, with permission, should your Government at any time deem it emergently necessary, for their occupation by British troops, under condition of their being again made over to the Cabul Government when such emergent necessity may have passed away.

(4.) After the above arrangements have been completed, to invite the Russian and Persian Governments to depute commissioners, to be met at some convenient place by others deputed from your Government, to consult on matters relating to Central Asia commerce, and the establishment of fairs and other centres of trade, and to decide on such other matters as may be laid before them.

APPENDIX B.

Extract from the Will of the Czar Peter the Great.

Almighty God, from whom we receive our existence and our Crown, having constantly enlightened us by His light, and sustained us by His divine support, permits that we should look upon the Russian people as called in future times to the entire dominion of Europe. I found Russia a *Brook*; I leave it a River. My successors will make it a vast sea, destined to fertilize Europe. For this reason, I leave to them the following precepts, which I recommend to their attention and to their constant observation.

To keep the Russian nation in a constant state of warfare, to keep the soldiers warlike, and always in a state of preparation—not to allow them any repose, except to improve the finances of the State; reform the army, and choose the most opportune moment for attacking—thus, in short, to make peace subservient to war, and war to peace, for the interests and aggrandisement and growing prosperity of Russia.

To entice, by every means possible, from the most civilized people of Europe, captains during a war, and learned men in time of peace, to enable the Russian nation to profit by the advantages of other nations without losing any one of those peculiarly its own; to take a part on all occasions in the affairs and misunderstandings, of whatever nature, in Europe, and, above all, in those of Germany, which, being nearer to us, interests us more directly; to sow division in Poland, by keeping up in her jealousies and troubles *continually*; to gain over the powerful by force of *Gold*; to influence the diets, to corrupt them, in order to act upon the elections of kings, and to cause our partisans to be elected, to protect them, and send in the Muskovite troops to sojourn there till the time shall be ripe for their remaining there altogether; to take from Sweden the most one possibly can, and contrive to make her attack us, in order to have a pretext for conquering her—for that purpose, to separate her from Denmark, and Denmark from Sweden—carefully to keep up their rivalries, always to take the wives for Russian princes from among the German princesses, with a view to multiply family alliances, to identify their interests with ours, and unite, of her own accord, Germany to our cause, by extending our influence in that country, to stretch ourselves without ceasing northwards along the Baltic, as well as southwards along the Black Sea, to approach as much as possible

to Constantinople and to India. Whoever shall reign there, will be the *real Sovereign* of the world—consequently, to excite incessant wars, sometimes in Persia, sometimes in Turkey; to seek, and keep up with care, the alliance of Austria; to encourage, in appearance, her notions of future sovereignty over all Germany, and to excite against her, *underhand*, the jealousies of the princes—endeavour to make one side or the other beg for the assistance of Russia, and exercise a sort of protection over the country, which shall pave the way for future dominion: to make it the interest of Austria to turn the Turks out of Europe, and to neutralize Austria's jealousy at the conquest of Constantinople, whether by getting up a war between her and the old states of Europe, or by giving to her a portion of the conquest which we will take from her a little later—to attach to us, and unite around us, all the disunited or schismatic Greeks, who are dispersed, whether in Hungary or in Turkey, or in the south of Poland, to make ourselves their *centre* and their support, and establish beforehand an universal domination, by means of a sort of autocracy or sacerdotal supremacy.

LONDON
STRANGEWAYS AND WALDEN, Printers, Castle St. Leicester Sq.

00027159

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018